French modeling agent charged with rape of a minor in Jeffrey Epstein probe

By Nancy Ing and Isobel van Hagen

PARIS — A modeling agent who is suspected of organizing the "accommodation of young girls or young women on behalf of Jeffrey Epstein" has been charged with the rape of minors, a French prosecutor said Saturday.

Jean Luc Brunel was arrested as part of an ongoing investigation on Wednesday at Charles de Gaulle airport as he was preparing to take a flight to Senegal.

Paris Prosecutor Remy Heitz said in a news release that he was charged with sexual harassment and the rape of minors over 15 years old by a magistrate on Friday, at the end of Brunel's custody period.

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Brunel, who was remanded in custody, "is suspected of having committed acts of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment on various minor or major victims and of having in particular organized the transport and accommodation of young girls or young women on behalf of Jeffrey Epstein," Heitz said.

He was not handed any human trafficking charges, one of the main lines of inquiry, as the magistrate decided that there was not currently enough evidence to rule on that count.

However, he was not acquitted and given the status of "an assisted witness of aggravated human trafficking." This means he can be questioned by three investigative judges and could be charged in future if anything new emerges.

An attorney for Brunel did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

> Protesters hold up signs of Jeffrey Epstein in front of the Federal courthouse on July 8, 2019 in New York City.Stephanie Keith / Getty Images file

Multiple women have identified themselves as victims and spoken to police since the French probe was opened in August last year, the same month in which Epstein committed suicide in jail.

He has previously denied any wrongdoing in a 2015 lawsuit against Epstein in which he alleged the “adverse publicity” surrounding the financier had damaged his reputation.

The arrest comes more than a year after Paris prosecutors opened an investigation into sexual abuse linked to Epstein and his possible accomplices on French victims or on French territory.

One Epstein accuser, Virginia Roberts Giuffre, said she was also abused by Brunel. Giuffre claimed in a 2016 deposition made public last year that Epstein and British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell had directed her to provide sexual services for Brunel.

Speaking to NBC's "Dateline" in a special that aired last September, Giuffre said Epstein told her he slept with "over a thousand women that Brunel brought in."

Epstein died by suicide inside a New York jail in August 2019 while he was awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

Maxwell, his longtime confidante, was arrested in July and remains jailed in New York.

Nancy Ing reported from Paris and Isobel van Hagen from London.

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Sarah Fitzpatrick contributed.